(c) Information with regard to grounding or withdrawal of MIG variants by the East European Countries is not available.

(d) As new MIG-21 trainers aircraft are not available in the global market, being out of production, secondhand MIG-21 trainer aircraft were purchased in the past to meet the training requirements of the Indian Air Force.

Proposal to increase the strength of flighter squadrons

1580. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from the IAF about the necessity to increase the current strength of Flighter Squadrons;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The Indian Air Force has formulated a modernization plan to enhance its combat aircraft strength in terms of quality as well as quantity.

(b) and (c) All necessary steps are being taken to increase the combat ability of IAF.

Procurement of NBC protective gear

1581. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed an agreement to procure protective gear for nuclear, biological and chemical warfare from the Czech Republic;

(b) if so, what are the other items that are proposed to be procured from the Czech Republic; and

(c) by when the products would arrive and be used?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) As on now, no agreement has been signed with the Czech Republic for

the procurement of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protective Gear, (b) and

(c) Does not arise.

Counter insurgency operations in Ghati (J&K)

1582. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether almost 5000 troops with members of Paramilitary Forces and State police had laid siege on a forested revine in Ghati in J and K for a week to counter insurgency operations in which militants escaped safely during the month of September, 2003;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to rectify the situation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) On 30th August 2003, a police party was fired upon by terrorists in Samba Sector, resulting in one fatal casualty of a police personnel. About 600 Army personnel joined the personnel from Central Police Organisations and launched a search operation to track down the terrorists. The densely forested Ghati area with undulating ground restricts visibility and allows undetected movement. The terrorists possibly took advantage of the terrain and managed to escape.

(c) Additional deployment of the Army has been made along the International Border to tackle any inf litration bids by terrorists. These troops have established an intelligence network to gain information of any terrorist movement and launch operations. Communication system for exchange of first hand information between executive level of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Army has also been put in place.

Allotment of Land etc. to war heroes

1583. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of 1971 war heroes, duly awarded with gallantry awards like Sena Medals, VSM and AVSM failed to get their due from respective State Governments by way of allotment of land etc.;